

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE CLAIMS

Claims 14 and 16 have been amended to clarify the recitation of the access restriction information based on the disclosure in the specification and drawings at, for example, pages 33-48 and Figs. 9-14.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 14-17 continue to be rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of the combination of 2002/0003897 ("Tanaka") and US 2004/0021893 ("Stevens et al"). This rejection, however, is respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as amended hereinabove.

According to the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 14, each of the image-processing apparatuses included in one of the plurality of groups stores access restriction information representing a restricted range of an accessing right to access other image-processing apparatuses

belonging to other groups. In addition, according to amended independent claim 14, a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the access restriction information, stored in the first image-processing apparatus, indicates that the first image-processing apparatus has been given the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus.

Thus, with the structure recited in amended independent claim 14, the plurality of image-processing apparatuses coupled to the network are divided into plural groups in such a manner that a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus is given to the first image-processing apparatus, as indicated by access restriction information stored by the first image processing apparatus.

As a result, with the structure of the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1, the first image-printing apparatus can form the reproduced image on the sheet, based on rasterized image data that is rasterized and outputted by the second image-processing apparatus.

According to the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 16, the server stores access restriction information with respect to each of the image-processing apparatuses included in one of the plurality of groups, the access restriction information representing a restricted range of an accessing right of the image-processing apparatuses in the group to access other image-processing apparatuses belonging to other groups. In addition, according to amended independent claim 16, a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the server gives the first image-processing apparatus the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus, based on the access restriction information stored in the server.

Thus, with the structure recited in amended independent claim 16, the plurality of image-processing apparatuses coupled to the network are divided into plural groups in such a manner that a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus is given to the first

image-processing apparatus by the server based on access restriction information stored by the server.

As a result, with the structure recited in amended independent claim 16, the first image-processing apparatus can request the second image-processing apparatus to perform the rasterizing operation, based on the accessing right given by the server. Then, the image-printing apparatus can form the reproduced image on the sheet, based on rasterized image data, which is rasterized and outputted by the second image-processing apparatus.

Therefore, according to the system configuration recited in independent claims 14 and 16, it becomes possible to effectively improve the efficiency of the rasterizing operations and the printing operations to be conducted in the whole system. See the disclosure in the specification at page 46, line 17 to page 48, line 2, with respect to advantageous effects that can be achieved with the structure of the present invention.

It is respectfully submitted that even in combination, Tanaka and Stevens et al do not disclose, teach or suggest the structure recited in amended independent claims 14 and 16.

More specifically, as noted in the Response filed on June 16, 2008, in the first paragraph on page 3 of the Final Office Action and the paragraph bridging pages 5 and 6 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner acknowledges that Tanaka does not disclose a system comprising an image-printing apparatus and a plurality of

image-processing apparatuses divided into groups or the structure related thereto recited in independent claims 14 and 16. For this reason, the Examiner has cited Stevens et al to supply the missing teachings of Tanaka.

As also noted in the Response filed on June 16, 2008, Stevens et al discloses a system for enabling a group of printers to print a document. More specifically, Stevens et al discloses dividing a plurality of printers into subgroups based on location and/or printing capability. According to Stevens et al, a computer 104 may transmit a document 140 to be printed to all of the printers in a selected subgroup (paragraphs [0043]-[0050]), and the user can print the document 140 from a desired one of the printers in the subgroup. The user prints the document 140 by providing the appropriate input to the printer, which includes a job name and PIN specified by the user (paragraphs [0051]-[0053]).

The Examiner asserts that the PIN disclosed by Stevens et al corresponds to the access restriction information recited in each of independent claims 14 and 16 (see, for example, item 11 of the Advisory Action).

It is respectfully submitted, however, that the meaning of the PIN described in Stevens et al is completely different from that of the "access restriction information" recited in amended independent claims 14 and 16.

That is, according to amended independent claims 14 and 16, the access restriction information represents a restricted range of an accessing right by image-processing apparatuses in one group to access other image-processing apparatuses belonging to other groups.

By contrast, the term "PIN," as is generally known and as used in Stevens et al, stands for "Personal Identification Number." That is, a PIN is one of various kinds of digital identification codes, such as a password, a code number (e.g., for an ATM card), a personal name code, a code for identifying individual personnel, etc., and is widely used in various data processing fields, such as on-line systems, security systems, banking systems, and so on. This meaning of "PIN" is consistent with the use of "PIN" by Stevens et al. That is, according to Stevens et al, a PIN is specified by the user to make a job private (see paragraphs [0042], [0043], [0046]).

Accordingly, the PIN disclosed by Stevens et al plays no role in representing accessing rights of one image-processing apparatus to another image-processing apparatus. Instead, the PIN of Stevens et al is a user-specified code to enable the user to designate and print a private job on a desired printer.

It is respectfully submitted that the PIN disclosed by Stevens et al is merely used in the same way as other well-known uses for PINs as described above. And it is respectfully submitted that the

PIN disclosed by Stevens et al does not at all correspond to, or even suggest, access restriction information which represents a restricted range of an accessing right by image-processing apparatuses in one group to access other image-processing apparatuses belonging to other groups, as recited in amended independent claims 14 and 16.

It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that none of the other disclosure in paragraphs [0046] or [0051]-[0053] (cited by the Examiner with respect to access restriction information) of Stevens et al at all suggests the access restriction information as recited in claim 14 or claim 16.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Stevens et al merely discloses dividing a plurality of printers (instead of the plurality of image-processing apparatuses, as recited in claims 14 and 16) into a plurality of groups according to the functions of the printers and/or the installation locations of the printers, so that a print job can be sent to the printers of a selected subgroup, and so that the user can select a desired printer from the printers retaining the print job.

And it is respectfully submitted that Stevens et al clearly fails to disclose, or even remotely suggest, any feature corresponding to the access restriction information or accessing right recited in amended independent claims 14 and 16.

In particular, it is respectfully submitted that Stevens et al completely fails to disclose or suggest access restriction information which represents a restricted range of an accessing right by image-processing apparatuses in one group to access other image-processing apparatuses belonging to other groups, as recited in amended independent claims 14 and 16.

In addition, it is respectfully submitted that Stevens et al also does not at all disclose, teach or suggest that a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the access restriction information, stored in the first image-processing apparatus, indicates that the first image-processing apparatus has been given the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus, as recited in amended independent claim 14.

Still further, it is respectfully submitted that Stevens et al also does not at all disclose, teach or suggest that a first image-processing belonging to a first one of the groups can request a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups to perform the rasterizing operation, only when the server gives the first image-processing apparatus the accessing right to access the second image-processing apparatus, based on the access

restriction information stored in the server, as recited in amended independent claim 16.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that even if Stevens et al were combinable with Tanaka in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the present invention as recited in independent claims 14 and 16 still would not be achieved or rendered obvious.

In particular, it is respectfully submitted that even in combination, Tanaka and Stevens et al do not suggest any features relating to access restriction information, an accessing right, or an image-processing apparatus belonging to a first group that is capable of performing a rasterizing operation in response to a request by an image-processing apparatus belonging to a second group in the manners recited in independent claim 14 and independent claim 16.

And it is respectfully submitted that the other cited references also fail to disclose, teach or suggest the features recited in independent claim 14 and independent claim 16.

It is again respectfully pointed out, moreover, that the Examiner's rejection of claim 16 does not address the recitation of a server in claim 16, and does not address that the server comprises the storage section to store the access restriction information and gives an accessing right to access the first group to the second image-processing apparatus belonging to the second group.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 14 and 16 and claims 15 and 17 respectively depending therefrom clearly patentably distinguish over Tanaka and Stevens et al, taken singly or in combination, under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103.

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Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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